

18th CONGRESS, }
1st Session. }

[99]

MEMORIAL

OF SUNDRY

Merchants, Traders,

AND OTHER

CITIZENS OF BALTIMORE.

MARCH 3, 1824.

Read, and referred to the Committee of the Whole House, to which is committed
the Bill to amend the several acts imposing duties on imports.

WASHINGTON:

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1824.



MEMORIAL.

To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled,

The Memorial of the Subscribers, Merchants and Traders, and Citizens of Baltimore, respectfully represents,

That your memorialists have viewed with deep concern the progress of the bill now pending before your honorable bodies, which has for its object the establishment of a new tariff, or to amend the several acts imposing duties on imports.

The provisions of that bill, if carried into execution, your memorialists apprehend, will seriously affect their rights and interest, as well as the rights and interest of the largest portion of the community.

Under our free and happy Government every citizen is at liberty to employ his capital, labor, and resources, of every kind, in the way that he may deem most profitable, useful, or agreeable, to himself, provided it does not violate law or the rights and privileges of others. It is the great and important office of Government to give equal protection to all lawful occupations, and never to cherish or exalt one at the expense of others. A deviation from this principle cannot fail to work injury and injustice. The very heavy duties contemplated by the bill in question, on many articles of foreign production, amount to a prohibition of their importation, and in the same degree operate in a premium or bounty to the manufacturer of the like article in this country. By this operation the merchant is checked in the freedom of his pursuits, and the consumer is heavily taxed. One part of the community is likely to be exalted at the expense of all the rest, and of course the law would be partial and unjust. Our Government was instituted for the purpose of promoting the general welfare, and when it deviates from this course, it ceases to be useful. The citizen who has embarked his fortune in commerce, or navigation, or agriculture, is equally entitled to the protection and encouragement of Government with the manufacturer; nor ought the strong arm of Government to be ever extended for the purpose of elevating the one above the other. That this would be the result of the proposed new system, if carried into execution, may be demonstrated, and has been already shown by the memorials already presented to your honorable body, by the New York Chamber of Commerce, and others. It will interfere too with the exchange of commodities with other nations. If we do not buy their manufactures they will not be customers for the produce of our country. This abridgment of commercial rights is an immediate loss to the merchant, and will be an

incalculable injury to the cultivators of cotton, rice, and tobacco, and commerce generally, provided a spirit of retaliation is exerted in other countries, and a system of countervailing duties is adopted by them, than which, no event in the womb of time, is more probable.

A direct and certain effect of extravagant or excessive duties is to introduce smuggling. No evil is more to be shunned than this, in a country, and under a Government, constituted as ours is. If ever it is encouraged by a respectable portion of the community, however small, it will quickly grow into extensive practice, and will require more force than the navy and army of the United States to put it down. The immoral effect and the injury to the public revenue and to the fair trader, will be felt for ages. Our republican institutions rest, for support, on the virtue of the people, and wise legislators will deprecate every measure that has a tendency to corrupt them. The new tariff, your memorialists humbly conceive, is one of this character. If the object of the depending bill is not to exalt one occupation at the expense of all the others, your memorialists are at a loss to understand for what purpose it is introduced. It cannot be for revenue. The old order of things has filled the Treasury to overflowing. This result has been produced without oppression, and all rejoice in it. Why change a certainty for a doubtful experiment, with odious and alarming features? Such conduct, your memorialists humbly conceive, is not compatible with wisdom or policy. It certainly is not compatible with the spirit of our free constitution. The manufactures of the country are amply protected at present. They flourish wherever they are conducted with skill and prudence, and are very able to stand alone. Your memorialists regret that they cannot say the same of our commerce and navigation. These languish, and are depressed to a degree that excites serious alarm, and are most worthy of the fostering care of Congress. They have been sources of wealth, and have yielded the means of support to Government.

Your memorialists might urge other and powerful arguments against the passage of the bill in question into a law. But the subject has been already so ably treated in the New York and other memorials, that more need not be stated at present. Your memorialists concur in the sentiments and opinions of these memorials, and believe, with their commercial brethren in other places, that the evils of the new system, if adopted, will preponderate over the good to be expected from it; that, in principle, it is unjust, and, in practice, will be oppressive to a great majority; that it will injure commerce, navigation, and agriculture. That it is calculated, in its operation, to benefit the few at the expense, and to the great injury, of the many; and that it will promote smuggling, impair the revenue, and destroy the fair trader.

Your memorialists therefore pray that the bill may not pass into a law. And they will pray, &c.